

Council Endorses Plans to Increase Safety for Cyclists and Pedestrians

Issue

In May 2007, a driver was charged with fatally striking a pedestrian in North Charleston, S.C. After hanging onto the vehicle, the pedestrian was thrown off and ran over. According to the National Highway Safety Transportation Administration (NHSTA), 125 pedestrian fatalities occurred in 2006. South Carolina ranks fourth in the nation for pedestrian deaths with 2.89 fatalities per 100,000 people. Another 16 South Carolinians died in 2006 as a result of bicycle and motor vehicle crashes. The fatality rate for 2006 stood at 3.70 per million, the seventh highest death rate in the nation.

Intervention

Thanks to funds from the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, the S.C. Governor's Council on Physical Fitness is able to address safety issues for South Carolina cyclists and pedestrians. Active transportation is a key part of promoting physical activity among South Carolinians, but access and safety are paramount to making it more universal. For example, the council's executive director in December 2007 attended a public hearing for the City of Greenville's Trails and Greenways Master Plan. The plan incorporated multiple modes of transportation, including an emphasis on bike and pedestrian safety and facilities. Some of the things accomplished in 2007 included:

- The executive director recommended Council endorsement of the Greenville plan, which showed support for the city's progressive efforts to include biking and walking as valid modes of safe transportation;
- A City of Greenville representative presented its plan at a Council meeting, and the Council officially endorsed the City of Greenville's Trails and Greenways Master Plan; and
- The Council facilitated the executive director's attendance to the Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Design and Planning Course at Portland State University. Portland, Oregon is one of only two cities in the United States that has received the prestigious Platinum Designation from the League of American Bicyclist as a Bicycle-Friendly Community. Technical information from Portland's first-hand experience with bike and pedestrian innovations, ideas, concepts, and strategies were brought back to South Carolina to be implemented here.

Impact

By promoting these strategies and concepts among jurisdictions, the Council can begin creating environments that are safer for pedestrians, cyclists, persons with disabilities, and other users. As a result the group has:

- Created livable communities with Complete Streets Endorsement criteria to support and promote jurisdictional efforts to include active transportation as an equal part of transportation planning; and
- Enabled the executive director to offer current information to decision-makers regarding bike/pedestrian road treatments, concepts, and ideas by offering consultation to jurisdictions. The City of Columbia utilized information given by the Council and recently received the official Bronze designation from the League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle-Friendly City.

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